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NEBRASKANS' PARTICIPATION IN NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY

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The Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey

David R. Johnson and Alan Booth, 1987 Study Co-Directors

The findings in this report are based on data collected in the Twelfth Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS). This survey is part of an on-going study of the quality of life in Nebraska conducted by the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In the Fall of 1987, a representative sample of 1882 Nebraskans eighteen years of age or older living in households was interviewed by telephone. The respondents were selected using a random digit telephone sampling design. The interview averaged approximately 30 minutes and included questions about work, recreation, attitudes towards public services, taxes, and political and social issues. Other items included in the survey measured the quality of life in the state. For the entire sample, 95 out of 100 times the percentages computed from the items asked on the survey are likely to be accurate to within plus or minus 2.3 percent of the figure that would have been obtained if each adult in Nebraska had been surveyed. This is an estimate of maximum error and for most items the percentages are likely to be even more accurate.

The data gathered by NASIS are used by a wide variety of state and local government agencies for policy and program planning and by faculty and students at the University of Nebraska and other colleges for research and training. No information identifying any respondent is released to any users and the strict confidentiality of individual respondents is rigidly enforced. While the final responsibility for the organisation and structure of the survey and for reports produced rests with the Bureau of Sociological Research, public agencies and university departments play an integral part in planning the survey through an Advisory Committee. Public organisations interested in membership on the Advisory Committee should contact the NASIS Study Directors.

Funding for NASIS comes from the University of Nebraska, the Bureau of Sociological Research, and state and local agencies which buy items and data analysis from the survey.

The NASIS surveys are repeated each year to measure change in the quality of life in Nebraska. While there is a core of questions which is included every year, each survey has a large component of unique items which address specific topical areas. Additional details on the NASIS surveys or questions regarding the use of the survey data or cost of purchasing items on future surveys can be obtained by contacting Alan Booth or David R. Johnson, NASIS Study Directors, at the Bureau of Sociological Research or by sending for a copy of the 1988 NASIS Prospectus.

NEBRASKANS' PARTICIPATION IN NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY

Based on its 1980 national survey, the U.S. Department of the Interior reports that wildlife-associated recreation has become one of this country's most popular forms of outdoor recreation. In 1980, 59 percent of the population, 99.8 million people, participated in fishing, hunting or observing, photographing, or feeding wildlife. The survey also found that many billions of dollars are spent each year in pursuit of these activities. For example, in 1980 about $7.8 billion was spent for freshwater fishing, $8.5 billion for hunting and another $4.0 billion was spent by people observing, photographing or feeding wildlife. As a result, the economic value of wildlife-associated recreation plays an increasingly important part in public policy decisions concerning the use of natural resources.

Nebraska's Platte River Valley offers many opportunities for wildlife- and other nature-associated recreation. The river and its lakes, McConaughy and Ogallala, provide diversified opportunites for anglers. The valley is a major wintering and staging area for geese and ducks, as well as several webless game species. Persons interested in observing and photographing wildlife can find several rare bird species, such as the Whooping Crane and Least Tern, and the river is a staging area for about 80 percent of the nation's Sandhill Cranes. Ornithologist Roger Tory Peterson includes the Platte River Valley as one of the dozen best locations in North America for observing birds.

Our purpose in this NASIS report is twofold. First, we will discuss what we have learned from a representive sample of 505 adult Nebraskans about their participation in and expenditures associated with several types of outdoor recreation. In addition to the three activities of fishing, hunting and observing wildlife, we have included several other forms of recreation that involve use of natural resources -- picnicking, swimming, canoeing or boating, nature walks or hiking, and camping. Second, we will present what we have learned from our interviews with state residents regarding what they think about developing the river and valley's natural resources for more extensive nature-associated forms of recreation.

Nebraskans' Participation in Nature-Associated Recreation

We began the interview by asking a general question about participation in various outdoor activities over the past year: Fall, 1986 through Fall, 1987. While it seems likely that most of the activities took place in Nebraska, our objective here was to find out about all nature-associated recreation, regardless of where it occurred. We told respondents:

I AM GOING TO NAME A NUMBER OF OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN DURING THEIR FREE TIME. FOR EACH ONE I WANT YOU TO TELL ME IF YOU PARTICIPATED IN THIS ACTIVITY DURING THE LAST YEAR.

We also asked people about the costs of their activities. This was measured by a slightly modified version of a question used in

the 1985 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, which was conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The question, using fishing as an example, was stated as follows:

IN ADDITION TO PARTICIPATION, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO ESTIMATE THE COST OF A TYPICAL DAY ENGAGING IN THAT ACTIVITY. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE OF THE ACTIVITIES IS FISHING. THINK ABOUT WHAT IT COST YOU FOR A TYPICAL DAY OF FISHING. INCLUDE EXPENSES FOR SUCH THINGS AS GASOLINE AND OTHER TRANSPORTATION COSTS, FOOD, LODGING, LICENSE, BAIT, BOAT, LAUNCHING FEES, AND EQUIPMENT RENTALS. IF YOU WENT ALONG WITH OTHERS, WE WANT ONLY YOUR SHARE OF THE COST.

As might be expected, among the activities we asked about, picnicking was the most popular. Inspection of Table 1 shows that nearly six of every ten adult Nebraskans in our sample went on a

Table 1. NEBRASKANS' PARTICIPATION AND ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES IN NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION: FALL, 1986 - FALL, 1987

Activity	Percentage Participating	Average Number of Days	Average Amount Spent in Last 12 Months by Participants	Total Amount Spent in Last 12 Months by Nebraskans
Picnicking	58.6	5.3	$ 9.35	$ 6,374,353
Swimming	30.4	10.6	85.85	30,363,748
Canoeing or Boating	32.4	9.6	250.23	94,321,691
Nature Walks or Hikes	35.6	13.2	80.86	33,489,674
Camping	33.1	10.2	565.94	217,938,280
Observing, Photographing or Feeding Wildlife	33.5	38.5	248.63	96,896,412
Fishing	33.5	10.2	193.98	97,962,233
Hunting	11.4	10.6	287.51	38,131,597
Estimated total amount spent by Nebraskans in last 12 months (Fall, 1986 - Fall, 1987)				$615,477,988

picnic at least once during the previous twelve months. On the other hand, partly because it does involve such a high proportion

of the population, the average number of picnics that people went on, 5.3, is low compared to some of the other activities. Swimming, canoeing or boating, nature walks or hikes, camping, observing wildlife and fishing were each engaged in by about one-third of the sample. Hunting has the lowest participation rate, 11.4 percent. Observing, photographing or feeding wildlife was enjoyed the most frequently; an average of 38.5 days during the year. The other activities, with the exception of picnicking, vary only slightly from each other with a range of 9.6 days for canoeing or boating to 13.2 days for nature walks.

Table 1 also shows the average amount spent by those who participated during the past year for each of the activities.[1] It can be seen that camping is by far the most expensive activity, averaging $565.94 per camper. It should be mentioned that the expenditures vary considerably depending upon the type of camping. Camping using a recreational vehicle had an average cost of $758 for the year and cabin and tent camping averaged $262 and $224 respectively. Interestingly, contrary to the national figures where expenditures for hunting are double those for observing, photographing and feeding wildlife, the reverse is true for Nebraska. Picnicking, which could involve simply taking some sandwiches or a bucket of chicken to the local park to enjoy the

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[1] The total expenditures were estimated from the average costs by sample participants (number of days participating by average costs per day). In all cases, the highest individual estimated expenses were truncated to one standard deviation above the mean.

fresh air, had an average cost of only $9.35. Taking all of the expenditures together, we estimate that adult Nebraskans spent $615.5 million from Fall, 1986 to Fall, 1987 for these nature-associated activities.

Nature-Associated Recreation In The Platte River Valley

After discussing nature-associated recreation in general with the respondents, we turned our attention to their activities in Nebraska's Platte River Valley. First, we told our respondents:

WE'RE ALSO INTERESTED IN THE USE OF NEBRASKA'S PLATTE RIVER AND RIVER VALLEY AS A RESOURCE FOR WILDLIFE, SPORT AND RECREATION. WE ALSO WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT IF YOU PARTICIPATED IN ANY OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES USING THE PLATTE RIVER OR THE RIVER'S SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT. (THIS INCLUDES ALL SECTIONS OF THE RIVER, NORTH, SOUTH, MIDDLE AND LOWER PLATTE, LAKE MCCONAUGHY AND LAKE OGALLALA.)

Table 2 shows the percentages of respondents who participated in nature-associated recreation in the Platte River Valley. Most of the participation rates are lower than the general rates, which is to be expected when focusing upon a specific area. The rank ordering of the more popular activities is similar, however. Picnicking has the highest percentage followed, respectively, by fishing, nature walks, observing wildlife and swimming. Smaller percentages say they went boating or hunting during the year. The average number of days people spent in these activities tend to be about the same or slightly less than for state participation in general with the exceptions of a slightly higher frequency for swimming and a lower one for observing, photographing or feeding wildlife.

The year's expenditure for picnics is much larger and for swimming slightly larger, while expenditures for other activities are less. The largest difference is in camping. Examination of differences by type of camping shows that the cost of tent camping

Table 2. NEBRASKANS' PARTICIPATION AND ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES IN NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY: FALL, 1986 - FALL, 1987

Activity	Percentage Participating	Average Number of Days	Average Amount Spent in Last 12 Months by Participants	Total Amount Spent in Last 12 Months by Nebraskans
Picnicking	17.0	5.3	$68.18	$ 4,779,987
Swimming	9.6	15.2	106.62	2,039,880
Canoeing or Boating	6.8	2.7	141.98	11,232,159
Nature Walks or Hikes	12.4	9.0	46.85	1,010,929
Camping	3.3	7.6	177.93	6,831,095
Observing, Photographing or Feeding Wildlife	11.8	9.2	75.71	1,727,067
Fishing	12.7	10.8	107.08	15,821,194
Hunting	3.5	8.6	191.93	7,815,164
Estimated total amount spent by Nebraskans in last 12 months (Fall, 1986 - Fall, 1987)				$51,257,474

in the Platte River Valley was about the same, an average of $224 for all camping and $204 for camping in the Platte Valley. However, camping with a recreational vehicle was only $165 compared to $758 for all camping and camping in a cabin in the Platte Valley was $72 compared to $262 for all cabin camping. It is possible that the cost and availability of a range of accomodations is smaller in the Platte area. Another possible explanation for the differences is that for most Nebraskans there are many places to go picnicking and swimming which are closer to

home than the Platte River Valley, but other good places for camping, hunting and so forth are likely to be farther away. Thus, when people travel to places other than the Platte Valley for these activities, it typically costs them more. Altogether, Nebraskans spent approximately $51.3 million on nature-associated recreation in the Platte River Valley during the twelve months prior to being interviewed. In other words, from Fall, 1986 to Fall, 1987, for every $12 spent by Nebraskans for nature-associated recreation, about $1 was spent for recreation in the Platte River Valley.

Nebraskans' Perceptions Of Economic Benefits From Nature-Associated Recreation In The Platte River Valley

Following our discussion of participation and expenditures, we asked respondents their opinions about the possible economic benefits of nature-associated activities to the state.

For this analysis, in addition to examining the responses from the residents of the state of Nebraska as a whole, we examined the perceptions and attitudes of a special sample of 100 adults who live in the Platte River Valley - people located in the Central Platte Natural Resources District (NRD). This includes residents of Dawson, Buffalo, Hall, Merrick, and corner portions of Custer, Nance and Polk Counties. The Platte River and the river valley are important agricultural resources for the nation and especially for the citizens of Nebraska. Since the valley is primarily used for agriculture, it becomes particularly important to know the views of farmers with respect to how the resources of the river and valley are used. Consequently, we also compared the

responses of people living in farm households with those who do not.

We began this part of the survey by telling our respondents:

"WE ARE INTERESTED IN YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THE PLATTE RIVER AREA AS AN ECONOMIC RESOURCE FOR WILDLIFE, SPORT AND RECREATION. WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW IF YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CONSTITUTES AN ECONOMIC RESOURCE."

Respondents were then presented with a series of statements and asked if they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or were not sure. Each statement began:

"THE STATE BENEFITS ECONOMICALLY FROM PEOPLE USING THE PLATTE RIVER FOR..."

The statements were then completed with:

"FISHING."
"GAME AND WATER FOWL HUNTING"
"RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS CAMPING, BOATING, SWIMMING AND PICNICKING."
"OBSERVING SANDHILL CRANES AND THE VARIOUS RARE AND ENDANGERED SPECIES OF BIRDS, SUCH AS THE WHOOPING CRANES AND EAGLES."

Table 3 shows the percentages of respondents who either strongly agree or agree that the state benefits economically from each of these activities. The table allows us to compare the views of people in the state as a whole with persons living in the Central Platte Natural Resources District and to compare the views of persons in farm households with those in nonfarm households.

Looking first at the findings for the state and those in the Central Platte area, we can see that large percentages believe that Nebraska benefits economically from these nature-associated activities. The smallest percentages perceive economic benefits

from observing Sandhill Cranes and various rare and endangered bird species, yet more than three of every four respondents believe Nebraska receives financial benefit from this activity. There is little difference between the responses of people in the

Table 3. PERCEIVED ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO NEBRASKA FROM NATURE-ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY

	Percentages Who Strongly Agree or Agree			
Economic Benefits	Nebraska	Central Platte NRD	Farm Household	Non-Farm Household
Fishing	88.9	81.2	89.4	88.8
Hunting	89.0	88.1	93.2	88.4
Recreation	93.3	94.3	99.1	92.6
Bird Watching	80.7	78.2	76.0	81.2

state as a whole and persons living in the Central Platte NRD.

Inspection of the responses of persons living in farming and non-farming households provided in Table 3 indicates little difference in the perceptions of the two groups. Farm households have higher percentages seeing economic benefits from hunting and recreation and a smaller percentage perceiving economic benefits from bird watching, but these differences are small and the important finding is that both groups contain large percentages of people believing that Nebraska benefits economically from nature-associated recreation.

Nebraskans' Perceptions Of Other Benefits From Nature-Associated Recreation In The Platte River Valley

Respondents were asked:

APART FROM POSSIBLE ECONOMIC BENEFITS, DO YOU BELIEVE THERE ARE ANY OTHER ADVANTAGES OR BENEFITS TO PRESERVING THE PLATTE RIVER AND VALLEY AS A RESOURCE FOR WILDLIFE, SPORT AND RECREATION?

A considerable majority of Nebraskans believe there are other benefits, as 80.9 percent of the state sample and 81.0 percent of the Central Platte NRD answered "yes." The same is true whether a respondent lives in a farm household or not, with 75.1 percent among the farming population and 81.7 percent among the non-farming population answering "yes."

Those who answered affirmatively to our question about additional benefits were then asked to briefly indicate what they thought some of the other advantages are. It is difficult to categorize answers to an open-end question of this sort both because short answers do not always convey precisely what a respondent means and because categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, certain themes stand out from the responses which provide insight into people's interest in the Platte area as a resource apart from the economic benefits that may be derived from it.[2]

Among the 389 respondents whose answers could be classified, 130 or 33.4 percent said they enjoyed the area for recreation or

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[2] In a very real sense the pleasure or other sources of satisfaction that people derive from nature-associated recreation can be considered a part of the net economic value of the resource and clearly adds to the quality of life. See, G. Brown and M. Hay, "Net Economic Recreation Values for Deer and Waterfowl Hunting and Trout Fishing, 1980," Working Paper No. 23, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1987.

simply that they enjoyed nature. Examples of these responses are:

"Benefit people, wonderful to enjoy and get away and be with nature"
"Keeping areas natural for enjoyment"
"People benefit from being able to enjoy wildlife; recreation also"
"People enjoy and get relaxation from it"
"Good for the soul"

Another frequent answer, from 28.5 percent of the respondents, was that it is important to maintain wildlife habitat. For example:

"Place for animals to live undisturbed"
"Place where the birds stop, let them have a place in Nebraska"
"People who like wildlife are happy and good for animals and stuff"
"Preservation of wildlife"
"For the wildlife, preserving their habitat"

Ninety-three people, 23.9 percent, indicated that it is important to preserve the area for historical reasons or simply for its own sake:

"Nature's way should be left to the future"
"It's worth preserving for posterity"
"Leave it as it is"
"Nature is important"
"Preserve a natural area for it's own value"

Other benefits mentioned include seventy people, 18.0 percent, mentioning the beauty of the river and valley, approximately five percent each listing the value of the area for agriculture, for education, the functional importance of the area for the region's ecosystem and simply for it's "natural resources."

Nebraskans' Perceptions Regarding Access To Nature-Associated Recreation In The Platte River Valley

Ease of access is clearly an important factor related to the extent to which a resource is used. We asked respondents:

DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS ANY PROBLEM WITH ACCESS TO WILDLIFE-ORIENTED RECREATION ALONG THE PLATTE OR IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY?

Table 4 shows the distribution of responses to this question.

Table 4. PERCEIVED PROBLEMS OF ACCESS TO NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY

	Percentages Responding			
Problem	Nebraska	Central Platte NRD	Farm Household	Non-Farm Household
Significant problem	9.7	12.1	8.7	9.8
Some problem	24.7	30.9	17.5	25.4
No problem	65.7	57.0	73.8	64.8

It can be seen that a majority of respondents say there are no problems associated with access to wildlife-associated recreation in the Platte River Valley. However, a relatively large minority say there are problems. There is no significant difference between farm households and others, but residents of the Central Platte NRD appear somewhat more likely than the state population to believe there is an access problem. It should be pointed out that perceptions of access vary considerably by residential location in the state; generally the further east, the less the likelihood of believing there is a problem. People living in Nebraska's panhandle are the most likely to report difficulty in access, 58.3 percent, whereas those in the southeast (which includes Lincoln and Omaha) are the least likely, 28.0 percent.

Respondents saying there is a problem of access were asked to indicate what sort of problem it is. Among the 136 respondents whose answers could be classified, 48.5 percent indicated that the major difficulty was the lack of public access. In other words, much of the land along the river is privately owned and thus one must find the landowner and secure permission. Examples are:

"A lot of private land, you need to know someone who lives on it"
"Access to river across private property"
"My favorite crane watching place has been fenced off"
"Private ownership of land"
"No access, trespassing on private property"

Twenty respondents, 14.7 percent, mentioned either a lack of roads or difficulty in using existing roads:

"Lack of roads leading to the river; and poor upkeep"
"Must cross private land -- need access roads"
"No roads to the Platte and surrounding area"
"No paths, no directions"
"Sometimes, a lot of roads are gravel"

Other problems mentioned, but by relatively small numbers of people, include a lack of information about where to go, 4.4 percent, and a limited amount of recreational facilities, 3.7 percent. Nine respondents interpreted access problems differently, pointed to instances of abuse, such as destruction of wildlife habitat or private property.

Nebraskans' Interest In Further Development Of The Platte River Valley For Nature-Associated Recreation

Respondents were then asked:

IF IT COULD BE DONE IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH PRIVATE PROPERTY OR THREATEN ANIMALS SPECIES, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE IDEA FOR DEVELOPING BETTER OR GREATER RESOURCES IN THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY FOR:

This was followed by several types of nature-associated recreation and for each they were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the idea of further development. The specific types of recreation are:

FISHING?
HUNTING?
PICNICKING, SWIMMING, BOATING, CAMPING AND SIMILAR RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES?
NATURE STUDY OR ENJOYMENT, SUCH AS OBSERVING, PHOTOGRAPHING OR FEEDING WILDLIFE?

The findings provided in Table 5 indicate that a very large

Table 5. NEBRASKANS' INTEREST IN FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY FOR NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION

Further Resource Development	Percentages Who Strongly Agree or Agree			
	Nebraska	Central Platte NRD	Farm Household	Non-Farm Household
Fishing	87.6	83.1	75.5	89.0
Hunting	72.4	70.1	61.3	73.7
Recreation	85.9	83.1	72.6	87.4
Nature Study or Enjoyment	90.7	90.3	82.9	91.7

percentage of Nebraskans would like to see further development of the Platte River Valley for nature-associated recreation of all the types mentioned. Nature study or enjoyment (e.g., observing, photographing or feeding wildlife) received the larger percentage

owest. Persons in farm households appear to be

erested in further nature-associated development, but this is relative since more than six in ten would like to see further development for hunting and more than eight in ten

indicate a desire for further development of nature study and enjoyment.

Nebraskans' Willingness to Help Support Further Development of the Platte River Valley for Nature-Associated Recreation

An important measure of the extent of interest in and commitment to resource use and development is the willingness to help support it. To measure the extent of commitment, we asked:

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO PAY EACH YEAR IN ADDITIONAL TAXES OR FEES EARMARKED TO DEVELOP THE PLATTE RIVER AS A NATURE, SPORT AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCE -- A LARGE AMOUNT SUCH AS $15, A MODERATE AMOUNT SUCH AS $5, A SMALL AMOUNT SUCH AS $1, OR NOTHING?

As can be seen from the percentages presented in Table 6, there appears to be strong support for further development of the Platte River Valley for nature-associated recreation with more than three

Table 6. NEBRASKANS' WILLINGNESS TO HELP SUPPORT FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLATTE RIVER VALLEY FOR NATURE-ASSOCIATED RECREATION

Willingness to Pay Additional Taxes or Fees	Percentages Responding			
	Nebraska	Central Platte NRD	Farm Household	Non-Farm Household
Large Amount	17.2	16.6	11.6	17.9
Moderate Amount	44.8	41.2	41.8	45.2
Small Amount	14.8	19.4	16.8	14.6
Nothing	23.1	22.8	29.8	22.3

of every four Nebraskans saying they are willing to pay an additional tax or use fee for this purpose. There is no significant difference between residents in the state as a whole and those living in the Central Platte area. Persons living in farm households may be a little less likely than those living in non-farm households to express a willingness to provide further

financial support; nevertheless, 70.2 percent of persons in the state's farming community say they would pay an additional tax or use fee for this purpose; in fact, 53.4 percent of farm households indicate a willingness to pay a moderate amount of $5.00 or more.

Conclusions

We began this report by pointing out that wildlife-associated and other forms of outdoor recreation, such as swimming and camping, are enjoyed by millions of Americans and that recreational use of natural areas represents an important economic resource. With this in mind, we set out to gain some insight into the current and potential value of one of Nebraska's most prominent natural areas, the Platte River Valley.

Based on the responses of a representative sample of 505 adult Nebraskans, we found that relatively high percentages participate in certain types of nature-associated recreation - picnicking, going on nature walks, observing, photographing or feeding wildlife, fishing, camping, and canoeing and boating. When this is combined with swimming and hunting, we estimate that Nebraskans spent $615.5 million from Fall, 1986 through Fall, 1987 on nature-associated recreation. Of course the amount would be larger yet if expenditures for children's participation in these activities were included.

The percentages of the state population who use natural resources in the Platte River Valley for nature-associated recreation are substantial when one considers the numbers of individuals involved. For example, the 12.4 percent who said they went on a nature walk or hike represents 144,261 people. Based

upon what people said all of their activities cost them, we estimate that Nebraskans spent $51.3 million on nature-associated recreation in the Platte River Valley from Fall, 1986 through Fall, 1987.

When asked whether the state benefits economically from nature-associated recreation, very high percentages answered affirmatively for all of the types of recreation mentioned and this was true for the statewide sample, for those living in the Central Platte Region and for persons living in farm households and non-farm houeholds. A very large proportion, about 8 of every 10, said the state also benefits in other ways from the Platte River Valley as a resource for wildlife, sport and recreation. Frequently mentioned were the enjoyment of nature, beauty of the river and valley, value of animal habitat, and the region's historical value.

Adequate access to a resource is no guarantee that it will be used, but lack of access will most certainly limit its use. We asked respondents if there is any problem with access to wildlife-oriented recreation in the Platte Valley. A little over one-third, 34.4 percent, said there is a problem. The most frequently mentioned problems are that much of the land is privately owned and there are few public roads or paths leading to the river that will allow a person to use the area for walking, camping, fishing and other nature-associated activities.

When asked if they would like to see further development of the Platte River Valley for nature-associated recreation, the great majority of respondents answered "yes." Over 90 percent said they would like to see further development for nature study

and enjoyment and the response was nearly as strong for recreation such as camping and fishing. There was an equally strong interest in further development among residents of the Central Platte NRD. Persons living in farm households were slightly less likely than others to want to see further development, but even so, a large majority answered "yes." Willingness to help support further development through paying a tax or use fee is a good measure of the strength of people's interest or commitment. When asked if they would be willing to do this, 76.9 percent of the state sample said they would be willing to pay a small amount, such as a dollar, or more. In fact, 44.8 percent said they would be willing to pay $5 and 17.2 percent said they would be willing to pay $15. The estimated state population of persons 18 years of age and older for 1986 is 1,163,395. Thus, if persons contributed only one dollar apiece, this would amount to more than one million dollars for development.

Our findings strongly indicate that Nebraskans use the Platte River Valley for nature-associated recreation and consider it a valuable resource for this purpose. Many would like to see further development for these activities and are willing to help in doing so. Of course, it should be kept in mind that developing the area for nature-associated recreation also means protecting it. To observe wildlife, to go on a nature walk, to fish or hunt, requires the preservation of habitat, the preservation of a natural area.

List of reports already released using data gathered in the 1987 Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey. These may be purchased at the indicated price from the Bureau of Sociological Research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Report Number	Title
1	1987 NASIS Methodology Report: Study Design, Instruments, and Forms. David R. Johnson. Price: $7.50.
2	Majority Favor Higher Salaries For Legislators. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
3	Majority Favor Alternatives to Death Penalty. Alan Booth. Price: $1.00.
4	Support Concept of Living Wills. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
5	Solid Waste Disposal Site Regulation. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
6	Surrogate Mothering. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
7	High School Pregnancy Prevention Clinics. Alan Booth. Price: $ .50.
8	Nebraskans Favor Tax Increase for their Favorite Programs. Alan Booth. Price: $1.00